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October 17th, 1967

Mr. Philip K. Edwards  
1-D-27-HQ  
Central Intelligence Agency  
Langley, Va. 20505

Dear Mr. Edwards,

I am writing to you on a subject which is not closely connected with either my official historical work or my bibliography: it is about a study group of the Kennedy Institute of Politics, Harvard University, which is undertaking a series of exploratory discussions on "The Role of History and Historians in American Foreign Policy Making." This study group, like all other Kennedy Institute study groups, is a confidential matter until such time, if ever, as a public report is deemed desirable.

As background to our discussions, Richard L. Berkman, a graduate student here, interviewed a large number of officials in the Departments of State, Defense, the Brookings Institution, Johns Hopkins SAIS, HERO, and including Messrs. Sherman Kent, [REDACTED] 25X1A9a

[REDACTED] of the Central Intelligence Agency. The main focus of this group is the historical role of the Department of State, what can be done to improve its work, and what can or should be done in other government agencies to assist, complement, or supplement historical activities in the Department of State.

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I was struck by the notes about Mr. [REDACTED] impressions of CIA; they were not in accord with what I had myself observed, and I thought that you, with your long experience and central position, might be able to clarify the matter and possibly to offer a few observations on the historical functions or possibilities for CIA, and how its historical work fits or should fit into the broader governmental historical effort.

First, I quote, for your personal information only, some of Mr. [REDACTED] observations:

"Although the CIA has a special office of economic research, nowhere within the CIA is there an office of historical research."

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... [REDACTED] feels that each man is his own historian."

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[REDACTED] feels that historians are valuable in policy making and intelligence work.... Yet [REDACTED] advised against institutionalizing an historical office because it would have to be for the benefit of people in each field. But [REDACTED] did hope that we could draw more good historians into govt

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In addition to Mr. Berkman's remarks, I recently had dinner with Louis Morton, Chairman of the American Historical Association's Committee on history in the federal government, and heard Professor Morton tell me that, as confirmed by no less than [REDACTED] "CIA didn't have an historical office, and they could use one." FOIAb3b

Two sets of questions arise: The first concerns the historical programs of CIA, whether they are adequate, whether they are emphasizing the best areas of research, whether they are most effectively organized and institutionalized (or not institutionalized, if such is better), and whether they effectively complement other historical research programs in the federal government.

The second concerns the optimum set of relationships among the various historical efforts of CIA and "the outside world," which from the view of your C.I. people might include other elements of CIA, other government agencies, "cleared" academics, and just plain historians.

I think that my somewhat contradictory image of CIA's historical efforts may be more related to this second set of issues, those related to liaison postures, relations with sectors of the public (not "public relations"), et cetera, rather than to the first set.

On November 2nd I shall be attending a session of this Kennedy Institute study group, under the chairmanship of Professor Ernest R. May of Harvard's History Department and formerly with the JCS Historical Staff. Initially, I'm concerned about this second set of issues --- since I'm not sure to what degree it would be useful to identify at least some degree of historical interest on the part of the Central Intelligence Agency, and to what degree the identification of CIA's historical interests would create liaison problems and complications.

I do think that brief consideration of a somewhat modified view of CIA's "historical posture" would be helpful for this small, private, off-the-record, 9-man study group, since they will be looking at what the State Department can and should do, and what might be better done elsewhere. There may be some historical programs which should be supported through CIA rather than through State, but which I would be constrained in discussing were it impossible to indicate any interest on the part of CIA in historical projects. For example, my perusal of some 8 departmental record systems convinced me that certain useful historical studies of decision-making or modern historical events in various foreign countries can best be performed, if at all, within CIA, and that such studies cannot be usefully performed outside CIA (except as with persons like myself, who though outside, expend considerable of their own and others' efforts at CIA).

Aside from whatever observations you would like to make on this second set of issues, what might usefully be discussed and what might usefully be avoided, in your judgment, I'd be interested in any views you've developed, over these many years, on some historical roles for CIA, basic problems, issues, etc., should you wish to make any off-the-record, personal observations on the subject.

Sincerely,  
*Bill Edwards*